

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-14 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 5, and 7-14 are amended herein. No new matter is added. In particular, the amendments are supported at least by original claim 4 and the specification at page 7, lines 14-20, and page 16, lines 16-21. In view of the amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The Office Action has not indicated acceptance of the drawings, and Applicants respectfully request such acknowledgement in the next Office communication.

The Office Action objects to claims 5, 7-10, and 12 based on various informalities. Applicants amend the claims as suggested by the Examiner, and therefore respectfully request that the objections be withdrawn.

Claims 9 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as directed to non-statutory subject matter. Applicants amend claims 9-12 to be directed to a computer-readable recording medium having a program recorded thereon. Applicants submit that the claimed recording medium is statutory, and therefore it is respectfully requested that the rejections withdrawn.

Claims 1-4 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0066791 to Wu et al. (hereinafter Wu) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,687,247 to Wilford et al. (hereinafter Wilford). Claims 5 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wu in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,724,358 to Headrick et al. (hereinafter Headrick). Claims 6-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wu and Headrick, and further in view of Wilford. Claims 9-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilford in view of Wu, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,947,413 to Wakabayashi et al. (hereinafter Wakabayashi). Claim 12

stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilford, Wu, Wakabayashi, and further in view of Headrick. Applicants respectfully traverse.

The Office Action relies on Wu as the principal reference that allegedly discloses various features of the claimed invention, and relies on Wilford as a combining reference that allegedly suggests the claimed order identification information features. However, the references, as cited, only include description of *separate handling of the output packets* at respective buffers for the output ports, and, therefore, do not suggest the claimed features of a plurality of output units reading data from a packet data storage unit. Therefore, for at least this reason, the claims as originally presented are allowable.

Additionally, and in the interest of expediting prosecution, and for the purpose of clarifying the claimed subject matter, Applicants amend the independent claims herein. The Office Action points out that a serial ID, as discussed at col. 19, line 26, of Wilford is regarded as output order identification information in the present invention. However, as disclosed in col. 46, lines 59-65, the buffering is done *separately for unicast and multicast packets*. Therefore, *a serial ID that indicates the output order of a plurality of packets including unicast and multicast packets is not disclosed at all in Wilford*.

Further, no cited document discloses buffering unicast and multicast packets to the same queue, as recited in regard to the packet data storage unit, nor outputting packet data in accordance with the output order that indicates the input order of a plurality of packets, including unicast and multicast packets.

In Wilford and Headrick, buffering of multicast packets is apparently done in a queue different from that for unicast packets. Therefore, the systems disclosed in these references significantly differ from the present invention in which buffering of unicast and multicast

packets is done in the same queue. When a unicast queue and a multicast queue are separated, as noted in lines Wilford at col. 45, lines 59-65, the bands for a unicast and a multicast need to be differentiated. By contrast, there is no such need in the present invention.

Therefore, for at least the above reasons, each of the independent claims is allowable. Each of the dependent claims is allowable for at least the same reasons as its respective base claim is allowable.

Additionally, claim 6 includes, *inter alia*, the feature of ***a multicast packet management information storage unit*** provided for each output port and storing packet management information including a storage position in said packet data storage unit for data of each multicast packet to be output through the output port. It is respectfully submitted that neither Wu nor Headrick disclose or suggest a multicast packet management information storage unit, as recited in claim 6, and therefore for at least this additional reason claim 6 is allowable.

In view of the remarks set forth above, this application is believed to be in condition for allowance which action is respectfully requested. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

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Respectfully submitted,

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